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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the increasing output of South Korean government publications in social science titles. It attributes the cause primarily to modernization and democratization combined with economic development and growth in associated social life indicators. Government sponsorship of education and research also plays a critical role. The following topics are addressed: (1) historical antecedents, including government sponsorship of research and promotion of literacy dating back to the 15th century; (2) quantity and quality of government issued social science information sources, including recent increases in output, expansion of census data, and the shift to electronic formats; (3) types of publications, including yearly statistical reports, yearbooks and annual reports, and white papers; (4) bibliographic control and access tools, including digital library projects, the Catalog of Government publications issued by the Government Publishing Office, and the Korean National Bibliography issued by the National Library; and (5) distribution and dissemination, including the legal depository system. (MES)

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Abstract

This paper examines the increasing output of South Korean government publications in social science titles. It attributes the cause primarily to modernization and democratization combined with economic development and growth in associated social life indicators. Government sponsorship of education and research also played a critical role.

Paper

I. INTRODUCTION

There are at least three hypotheses that are relevant to understanding the contemporary growth of social scientific data and information sources in Asia. One posits that growth depends on an increase in economic output and associated social life indicators. Another posits a historical legacy of library development with holdings that reference, at least tangentially, social science issues. Yet a third suggests that the growth of social science information sources depends upon government sponsorship of education and research including a strong component in the social sciences.

To some extent all three of these hypotheses interlock in the case of Asia. It is, after all, the case that in China in the early years of the Ching Dynasty library

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holdings were one of the largest in the world. It is also true that in China and Korea the traditional meritocratic basis for status advancement was through an examination system that placed a premium on education. These historical features were firmly imbedded in traditional cultural values and they have left an abiding legacy that has helped in the growth of modern day social science information sources.

Despite these historical legacies, however, it is modernization in general and improvements in social life that have been crucial for the development of social science research. Consider the following. During the last three decades South Korean per capita GNP rose from a little over $640 to over $8000.00. The illiteracy rate dropped from 12% in the mid 1970s to less than 5% in the mid 1990s. Government expenditures on social security doubled from the 1980s to the mid 1990s. Life expectancy rose from 61 years in the mid 1970s to 71 in the mid 1990s while infant mortality dropped from 47 per 1000 live births to 12 during the same period. (1)

Is there a qualitative correlation between these growth figures and a greater output of social scientific data and information sources? Given the limited nature of this paper, and the fact that much social science data is published in the form of government documents, I will attempt an answer by concentrating on official publications in South Korea.

II. THE CASE OF SOUTH KOREA

1. Historical Antecedents

A 1984 UNESCO study characterized social science research in Asia as emanating from relatively young academic disciplines that were largely imported from the West around the turn of the century.(2) While this characterization may be true as a gross generalization, it is not the case that social science materials were unknown in traditional Korea. In the royal court of King Sejong in the 15th century, the palace (i.e. the government or the state) actively promoted literacy among the general public even to the extent of creating a new Korean alphabet, Hangul. The palace Royal Academy scholars were also responsible for publications on agricultural economics, geographical descriptions of the country, the compilation of legal codes and official histories. Through the Royal Academy (Chiphyunjon), a precursor to the numerous government sponsored research institutes that exist in contemporary Korea, the state promoted research in many areas including social science. These historical compilations were critical primary source documents in their day and continue to be so for modern social scientists.

This tradition of government sponsorship of research continues to this date in Korea (as it does in many Asian countries). Hwa asserts that the Singapore Government plays an important, if not crucial role in financing teaching and research in the social sciences.(3) Our host country Thailand, passed a National Research Council Act in 1959; it has been said that since the creation of the NRC there has been an increase in the number of social science research cells attached to government departments and agencies.(4) Although S.P. Agrawal suggests that social science information in India has low governmental priority, it was the Education Ministry of the Government of India that established the National Social Science Documentation Centre.(5)

In South Korea the government has increasingly become a critical stimulant to the production and growth of scientific research as well as social science information sources. In contrast to technical and scientific research areas,

however, social science research in Korea occupied initially an unenviable position as an underprivileged and under-funded area of inquiry; the acquisition of specialized knowledge in technical and scientific areas and in industrial know-how had higher priority. This effort rewarded South Korea with a fast growing economy, the results of which have paved the way for the promotion of research on social issues as well as on the ways that scientific and technical developments have impacted social life.

2. Quantity and Quality of Government Issued Social Science Information Sources

The number of publications of social science materials issued by the South Korean government and by quasi-government organizations, i.e. government-invested enterprises and government-related agencies has increased significantly. According to the 1997 Catalog of Government Publications the total number of government publications issued in 1996 was 4,697--among these over 3000 titles (66%) are classified as social science titles. This is an increase of 6% over 1993 in the number of social science titles published by the government.(6) It is relatively easy to measure the quantity of government issued publications; between 1945-1965 only 293 titles were issued. By contrast in 1966 alone the number of government publications jumped to 903 titles, tripling the total output of the previous 20 years.

When South Korea began its economic expansion in the early 1960s, this also marked the acceleration of official publishing by government agencies, not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality. For example, it was the 1960 census that embarked on the expansion and transformation of the census from one where only basic demographic data were collected to one where multi-faceted information on socio-economic characteristics were obtained and analyzed utilizing computerized database processing. In 1964 the government also began to review and classify the local administrative districts of the entire country. This was done in order that appropriate data could be collected on each unit. Many government statistics are collected based on these continuing reviews and classifications.(7)

It appears that South Korean government agencies at all levels are rapidly shifting their publications from a print to an electronic format. Many government agencies have an Internet presence, a large number of them with an extensive bilingual homepage (Korean and English). The quality and content of homepages vary from one agency to another, e.g., some carry an extensive publications list with detailed annotations. Examples of government units with homepages are the National Historical Compilation Committee, the Supreme Court, the National Statistical Office, the National Library and the National Assembly Library. The National Statistical Office has begun to build massive numeric data files that are becoming a critical source for contemporary social science research. The electronic information resources that the Korean government provides on the Internet promises to enhance the quantity and quality of global social science information.

3. Types of Publications

At the heart of social science information resources are three principal types of publications issued by the executive branch of the government. These are yearly statistical reports, yearbooks and annual reports and white papers, all of which constitute important primary source data for social scientists. Korean government publications are rich in statistical reports. Publication of these reports is frequently mandated by a comprehensive statistical law that requires

that each government agency/ministry issue an annual (or quarterly) statistical analysis. Statistical yearbooks (Tonnggye Yongam) issued by government ministries are good examples in this category. The title and the text of statistical yearbooks are often bilingual (in Korean and English) and almost always contain international statistics for comparative purposes. These statistical reports are the best sellers among government publications; about 35% of government publications deal with statistical data. (8)

Following a pattern that originated in Great Britain, white papers (Baiksuh) are issued by almost all ministries. These government reports deal with timely national topics. This form of government report has existed since 1948 when the first government was formed following the end of Japan's colonial domination. Many social, political and economic issues are analyzed by appropriate ministries. Unlike statistical reports, Korean government white papers are almost always written in Korean.

4. Bibliographic Control and Access Tools

Despite Korea's reputation for having moved from "imitation to innovation" in economic and technical matters, there are few innovations in the repackaging of government information for easy public access. Providing access to government publications through specialized catalogs and indexes is largely done by the issuing agency itself. Two of the most prolific of these agencies are the National Statistical Office and the Ministry of Unification. The National Library and the National Assembly Library are actively involved in the dissemination of social science information through their digital library projects.

The two main access tools for South Korean government publications are the Catalog of Government Publications issued annually by the Government Publishing Office, and the section on government publications in the Korean National Bibliography issued by the National Library.

5. Distribution and Dissemination

While the number of government publications issued by various agencies has increased dramatically in recent years (the number actually doubled in the last five years from 2,680 titles issued in 1992 to 4,697 titles in 1997), no centralized or systematic distribution method has yet been adopted, particularly one designed to reach large numbers of the public. The majority of government publications, while compiled and edited by an issuing government agency, are invariably printed by private printers. They are distributed either by the issuing agency itself or, if priced, through designated sales centers.

The National Assembly Library, the National Library, the National Archives and Records Service and the Library of the Government Publishing Office are currently legal depository libraries. All government agencies, including government-invested enterprises and government-related agencies, whether they are national or local, are required, by law, to place their publications in depository libraries.

Although the word Nappon Tosohkwan is translated as depository library, it has a very different meaning conceptually from the term „depository library" as it is used for government publications in America. In the United States US federal government agency publications are deposited in designated libraries by the government for the purpose of public distribution and public access. In the Korean sense of „depository library" the „deposit" is made by the publishers (including government agencies) in the designated libraries (i.e. government

libraries) for the purpose of preserving the cultural heritage, for copyright protection, for international exchange and, lastly, for public access.

The legal depository system was first introduced as part of the 1963 Library Laws. Prior to this in 1961, all publishers were required to submit two copies of their publications to the Ministry of Education which then forwarded them to the National Library. The 1963 National Assembly Law No. 1424 requires all government agencies to deposit three copies of their publications in the National Assembly Library. Since 1991 three copies of publications produced by the executive branch of the government, by city/provincial governments and by city/provincial Educational Commissions have also been deposited with the Government Archives and Records Service. Since 1996 three copies of the same category of materials have also been deposited with the Library of the Government Publishing Office Library.

It has long been recognized, however, that many government agencies fail to comply with these legal obligations. Moreover, there has been no effective way in general to enforce the deposit system law. Some argue that initially the legal deposit system was viewed as „censorship" or „thought police" as it was at times practiced during the Japanese colonial period or under previous autocratic governments. Especially under Japanese rule prior submission of a manuscript to the colonial government was required for official approval. (9)

III CONCLUSION

Despite the fact that there is an apparent correlation between economic growth and the development of social science information sources, it is clear that this is not the sole explanation. For many years following World War II, Korea labored under various forms of authoritarian government. Democracy as it is understood in the West did not truly arrive until 1992. Prior to that time, social science information sources disseminated by the government were frequently viewed as propagandistic disinformation. Interestingly, the advent of democracy has witnessed a marked upsurge in the quantity and quality of government publications that deal with social science issues. Nothing speaks more eloquently to the importance of an open political environment as a stimulant to the production, dissemination and use of social science research information sources.

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